

## PLANNING VIRTUAL EVENTS

Hosting virtual programs and events can be effective ways to help your organization achieve its goals and foster camaraderie within your organization. Like an in-person event, it takes planning and forethought to ensure the success of a virtual event. The following outlines some basic programming tips and best practices for virtual events. Visit [Longhorn Connection](#) for virtual event ideas.

### STEP 1: Design Your Event

It can be helpful to approach the design of a virtual event in the same way you would a live event. Answering the questions below can help inform your next steps.

- What is the goal of this event? Make it relevant, purposeful and different from other events.
- Who is the target audience? How many attendees do you expect?
- What will be the format? How long will the event be (no longer than 2 hours)?
  - All video, well designed slides, live demo or a combination?
  - A 30-minute presentation from a single speaker, followed by a 30-minute Q&A?
  - An Hour-long panel discussion based on pre-submitted questions?
- Would breakout sessions be helpful for further discussion?
- What is on your event's agenda?
- How will you engage your attendees? Hand raise, chat, poll, or Q&A features?
- Is there a budget for the event? Virtual events can be cost effective but may still require a small budget. How will you secure [funding](#)?

### STEP 2: Choose Your Date(s) and Times Carefully

Find a convenient date and time for members in the group and for the entertainment/guest speaker. Choose a date that does not conflict with other existing campus programs. Do your dates conflict with a major University events and activities? Not Sure? Visit the [University Events Calendar](#), [Academic Calendar](#), and [Longhorn Connection](#) page for dates to avoid.

### STEP 3: Assemble Your Team

Who are the key players producing your virtual event?

- The host. This person will be responsible for technical aspects of your event.
- The Co-host(s). A backup to the host with access to similar technical controls as the host. They can assist with technical difficulties and prioritize attendee engagement during the event.
  - Welcomes attendees, curating an intimate atmosphere in a not-so-intimate virtual platform
  - Moderates chat, polls, Q&A
  - Removes disruptive attendees, if needed
- Breakout Room moderators. If including Breakout Rooms in your event (available on the Zoom meeting platform), these moderators will facilitate a productive discussion. This may or may not be your event speakers/panelists.
- Panelists and Speakers. Their role is to engage attendees with content. In-person talks can be much different than virtual. Ensure they are comfortable speaking in a virtual format.

### STEP 4: Determine Technology Needs

Will you have 10 attendees or 200? Do you need polling, breakout rooms or dial in options? Will you rely on video or the ability to share screens for a live demos and slides? [Zoom](#) can accommodate these options but don't be afraid to explore other options. Research platform features that best meet your organizations event needs. Once determined, be sure to adjust the platform settings and controls to protect your event from accidental interruptions by attendees and disruption from uninvited guests.

## STEP 5: Choose a Registration Platform

Is your event open or closed? Either way, it's important to utilize an RSVP function to track how many attendees to expect. Having an RSVP allows you to engage with attendees prior to the event. It's recommended that you use the HornsLink event tool to create an event and track RSVP's. Zoom offers a free registration feature with options to manually approve registrants and pre-assign attendees to Breakout Rooms (in Zoom meetings only).

## STEP 6: Advertise Your Event on HornsLink and Campus Monitors

Design publicity strategies for targeted audiences. Design promotions to fit the style and theme of the program. Be creative, neat and accurate. Distribute publicity at least two weeks in advance to ensure interested UT community member can learn about it and RSVP. The HornsLink events board is the hub for student organization event listings. An officer just needs to log into [HornsLink](#) and use the events tool in its organizations profile to submit the event for review.

There are several facilities that allow advertisements on the monitors located in their buildings. Each has different requirements and guidelines. See below for options and contact the respective entity should you have questions.

- UHD Residence Life [Cable TV Info Channel](#)
- McCombs School of Business [Message Monitors](#)
- Student Services Building (SSB) [Monitors](#)
- Rec Sports [TV Monitors](#)
- University Unions [DigiKnow System](#)

## STEP 7: Prepare Your Speakers/Panelists

If your event involves talks, then it's important to brief your speakers carefully. For Q&A sessions, scripting some (not all) of the questions in advance to make sure that speakers are aware and fully prepped for them.

## STEP 8: Prepare Your Attendees

Make sure that your attendees are prepared. Share a reminder 24 hours in advance regarding the event along with the event link. Include participant instructions to help management expectations for a smooth event such as joining the event at least five minutes in advance so the event can start on time, muting their mics upon entry, displaying their video and instructions on engagement tools for Q&A.

## STEP 9: Produce Your Event

Similar to an in-person event, a little preparation goes a long way. Key players should receive a final briefing and agenda at least 24 hours in advance of the event. It's also a good idea to schedule a practice session with key players to test software and Zoom settings.

On the day of your event, consider having the host sign in 60 minutes in advance to confirm settings\*, controls, and the video/audio connection. Speakers, panelists, and co-hosts should connect at least 20 minutes prior to test their connection, find the best lighting and review the agenda.

\*If your Zoom settings have been set to mute participants upon entry, disable screen sharing or video - don't forget to give your presenters back their permissions. You can do this in the [Manage Participants](#) window.

## STEP 10: Follow-up With Attendees

After the event, use Zoom to generate an attendee report and follow up to share recordings or resources that were discussed, conduct a survey to collect feedback from attendees that may help you plan future virtual events, and/or market future events.